atlas, let me tend your wounds

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by cafewrites

Summary

Three months of intensive rehabilitation and the promise of staying clean—as if he had been dirty before, crusted over by filth and immorality—had Frank standing in front of the Center with one hand on his backpack strap and one hand holding up a phone to his ear. The taxi was a few minutes out, and Frank let his eyes unfocus for a while, letting his brain drift above himself in a nice and comfortable cloud of dissociation before the yellow car slowed to a stop before him.

or: Frank Langdon develops a self injury addiction to cope with not being able to rely on drugs anymore.

Chapter 1

The thing about rehab, Langdon thought, is that they didn't instruct you on how to live your life after you walk through the doors that had forced you into sobriety.

Three months of intensive rehabilitation and the promise of staying clean—as if he had been dirty before, crusted over by filth and immorality—had Frank standing in front of the Center with one hand on his backpack strap and one hand holding up a phone to his ear. The taxi was a few minutes out, and Frank let his eyes unfocus for a while, letting his brain drift above himself in a nice and comfortable cloud of dissociation before the yellow car slowed to a stop before him.

They hadn't known, exactly, why Frank had gotten clean as quickly as he did. Especially judging by the frequency he had been taking the opiates at and how much he was drinking himself to sleep in a week, and how brutal his withdrawals had been when first starting out.

He hadn't noticed the descent towards rock bottom. He hadn't anticipated being revealed to the world like a fresh wound in desperate need of stitching together. His nosedive had somehow escaped his notice.

He wondered if Robby knew how bad it was. If he knew how much he had vomited in his room, his roommate cowering in the corner with hands over his eyes to provide Frank with a shred of dignity.

He wondered if he was aware of how his stomach had clawed itself to shreds and his blood cells screamed for mercy. His back pain had come back with a vengeance, angry at the way Frank had ignored it by taking medications not meant for him. And the agony it delivered was not helped at all—ibuprofen or pain medication could be relied on for addiction, and the doctors there had barred him from taking anything stronger than ginger tea and hot compresses for his pain.

It had been hell. True, Dante's inferno, hell.

If it was this bad for him, he could scarcely imagine how the physicians had treated those they deemed lost causes or "dangers." His whiteness had gotten him privileges like patience and pity, and the rapid way in which he was offered back his job.

His roommate had not been so lucky.

Raphael was in his second cycle of rehab off of alcohol and opiates. The patient scrubs they were all forced to wear exposed his arms. They were littered with ladder scars contrasting sharply with his deep tanned skin. From wrist to presumably shoulder, Raphael's addictions did not keep silent.

Three days before he was released, Frank had been told that Raphael was sent to a hospital.

"What the hell? He's in a hospital right now, what the fuck happened?"

The woman informing him had sighed, "He found a way into the kitchens last night. Left quite the bloody scene. He's been sent to a more intensive care center."

Frank had been silent the days following, thinking about Raphael laughing over card games and sleeping five feet away from him, sneaking away while Frank dreamt to try to end it all.

Fuck. When had his life gotten so fucked?

And he had survived it, somehow. He didn't exactly know how he had been able to do so. But he knew one reason for his achievement, and it was marked up and down his body in freshly healed scratches dug into the skin.

He could do this. He could go back to his job and his life and his career, even if Abby didn't want to see his face again and he could only see his children on weekends. He could get through it— after all, now he had another way to regulate.

From digging his nails into his palms, scratching up his arms until skin flaked up, or letting his back pain radiate with no relief from medicine, Frank was starting to rely on pain to dull the senses like benzos once did. But this time, he wouldn't get in trouble for his self-destruction.

Like most things when it came to Frank Langdon, it escalated.

It wasn't long until he could no longer stand the speculative glances, the tension between the people he once looked up to (Dana and Robby and Abbott) and those he was set to once mentor.

He had apologized to Santos for the way he had treated her, and she accepted it and apologized back. It was strange and uncomfortable and downright embarrassing, and he had taken a moment in the restroom to scratch open a scab he had made a few days ago with his nails. With his new pension for wearing long sleeves under his scrubs, nobody suspected a thing.

Which is why he graduated from scratches to razor blades. Scalpels were too sharp, and extremely dangerous for an amateur. If nothing else, Frank knew about the necessity for moderation. It had taken weeks of benzos to know what his limits were, how much he needed in order to function and not be a zombie to the world. It was the same with cutting. Trial and error.

And trials he conducted.

His biceps were the primary target of his violence. Small cuts up and down the skin after shifts where everything got to be too much, or Robby stared at him a little too long and he remembered how it was before he fucked everything up like he always did.

When he got the divorce papers, he made as many cuts as there were paragraphs in the document and waited a little longer than usual to wrap them.

He was living on autopilot and cutting had somehow become the guidance mechanisms making the plane head on a steady course. Frank found he didn't quite mind.

"Langdon, a word?" Robby's voice broke Frank's typing and he flinched despite himself.

It was the same words that the psychologist at the Center said after a group session, ready to scold him on not speaking other than denying he was an addict. After a few weeks he had relented.

Hi, I'm Frank he had said. *And I'm an addict…fuck.*

"Langdon?"

"Yeah," Frank got to his feet swiftly, feeling his weight shift with the rush. "What's up?"

Robby motioned to follow him and took him to the empty viewing room. A rare day where nobody had died. Yet, he supposed.

“So, how has it been? Being back I mean,” Robby asked. “I should have asked weeks ago but I just kept forgetting until it was too late.”

It’s already too late Frank thought. *I’m broken beyond reparation.*

“It’s been fine.”

Robby quirked an eyebrow, sighing when Frank didn’t break. Compared to the physicians and psychologists at the Center, Robby was like a wet cat meowing, trying to get a response.

“Look, I know it’s hard. For what it’s worth, I’m glad you’re back, seriously. We missed you around here,” Robby spoke rapidly, eyes shifting to the door like he was ready to escape. “If you need anything —”

“I don’t,” Frank narrowed his eyes. “Look, you don’t have to do… whatever this is. It’s been three months already, it’s a bit late for a check in. So do us both a favor and quit acting like you give a shit.”

Robby stepped back, eyes widening before he scoffed in offense.

“I do care,” he spit out, as if it was a tragedy to think otherwise. “Of course I care.”

“Yeah, the calls and visits that didn’t happen when I was in rehab really solidified that, Robby, thank you,” Frank spoke before he took a deep breath to calm himself. “Am I excused? I need to piss.”

Robby swallowed at his words, rubbing a hand over his face. His shoulders slumped.

“Sure, Frank,” he spoke quietly, his voice cracking slightly with *dear god were those tears?* “You’re excused.”

Frank fled from the room, not looking back to see if Robby had followed.

“Dr. Langdon, can I ask for a second pair of eyes on this case?” Mel asked.

He was direct, as he had come to learn was the best way to talk to her: “How urgent is it? 1-10, 10 being death is imminent.”

“6?”

He breathed in deep. Bit his lip harshly.

“Can it wait two minutes?”

“Of course.”

“What room?”

Mel told him, and he confirmed to meet her there in a few minutes.

He didn’t need to go to the bathroom, but as he walked by Robby (who’s eyes were rimmed red and was speaking quietly to Dana) he needed *it* more than he needed air. He needed a release. He stripped his under and outer clothes covering his torso and looked over himself in the stall, immediately gravitating toward a scabbed cut that had a small bit flaking off. The perfect scab to ruin, to feel pain.

His nails scratched and scratched until red bloomed beneath them, staining his hands as drops slowly but surely trickled up from under the skin. He breathed a sigh of release. In a way, it was better than benzos. He never did the drugs at work, no matter what anybody had said (sure he may have arrived high a few times, but he hadn’t done it AT the job). But this, he could do at any time. That, in many ways, was perfect.

After every random urine test that was necessary to keep his job, he would succumb to the urge to punish himself for having to do them in the first place. Like a ritual. Like coming home after a long day of surviving hell.

Robby was acting strange.

Nicer and more patient with him, and it was driving Frank insane. He was acting like he wasn’t the same man who yelled at him as a student and kept yelling as a resident, always pushing him to be better, quicker, more talented. Now, he skirted around him. If Frank were to make a mistake, he was sure Robby would comfort him instead of tell him all the ways in which he had fucked up, and that infuriated him. He wasn’t a student doctor anymore, but he was being treated like one.

“Dr. Robby, can I talk to you?”

He had finally had enough, coming up behind the man as soon as he had a break in patients to be able to. Robby whipped around at the sound of his voice.

“Oh, sure Fr—, Langdon. Come over here,” ironically, he guided them once more to the viewing room. There was a body laying completely still on the table, but they only lowered their voices in respect and carried on.

“What’s going on?” Robby asked, concerned.

Frank felt his resolve dissolve in front of the man he still adored, still respected and admired so much it felt like his chest was being crushed whenever he looked at him.

“Um, that’s my question, actually,” Frank shifted on his feet nervously. “You’re acting weird.”

Robby crossed his arms and pursed his lips in thought, “How am I acting weird?”

Frank waved a desperate hand around, gesturing at nothing.

“How? How about how you never yell at me anymore, or challenge me, or tell me all the things I do wrong? What is this, are you scared I’ll go full addict crazy again if you treat me like anything more than a piece of glass?”

Robby looked at a loss for words, mulling over his thoughts while grinding his teeth. Eventually, he looked up at Frank.

“I feel guilty.”

Frank furrowed his eyebrows in confusion.

“What? What the hell for?”

Robby let out a soft, sad laugh.

“I didn’t notice you were struggling. I laughed at your back pain. I screamed at you when you were scared for your future. I didn’t visit or call you at your rehab that was barely thirty minutes away from my house. I didn’t check in on you—”

“Stop.”

“— when you came back to work, even though I knew it would be frightening and uncomfortable and difficult for you—

“Stop it!”

"—I could go on Frank, so yeah I feel fucking guilty!"

Frank surged forward and wrapped his arms around his mentor, feeling a sting in his eyes and throat as he embraced the man. They were both trembling almost unperceptively, but this close, he could feel it. The cuts he made last night on his right bicep scratched against the bandages, but he narrowed in on the pain and squeezed tighter, sighing when Robby finally brought up his arms around him.

"It was my fault, Robby. All of it. Stop this bullshit," it wasn't the best words, but it was all he could say after the onslaught of guilty confession.

Robby shook his head against the crook of his neck.

"I should have noticed. But I notice now," he whispered, and Frank stiffened immediately. Robby held him tighter as if scared he would run. "I notice now, and I don't know how to help, and that makes me the most guilty of all."

Frank tore himself away from the older man and stumbled back against the wall.

"What are you…what the fuck are you talking about?"

Robby swallowed and walked forward. His hand comes up to cup Frank's face, and his breath fans over it. The other hand gently runs up his arm as he speaks.

"I know you don't take any pain meds anymore, even when you practically limp through the ED because how much you hurt," he whispers, and his breath hitches when it stops at the bandage on his lower bicep. "And…you used to hate wearing double layers, no matter how cold it got. Always made stupid jokes about not depriving everybody of your muscles."

Frank let his head hang down limply, tears rolling down and tickling his nose before dropping on the floor. Robby brings up both hands to pull him close, so he can bury his wet nose into his neck. He feels a soft kiss in his hair as he shakes.

"You don't have to act okay to be accepted back to work here, Frank," Robby whispers into his ear, and Frank's hands settle on the older man's waist in exhausted resignation. "It's alright to need help."

"I got help," Frank cried. "I got help, and now I'm supposed to be all

better. I'm supposed to be fixed—"

"There was nothing about you that needed *fixing* Frank. And you did get better, I'm so proud of you, so so proud of all you've done for yourself," Robby replied. "And we both know it doesn't work like that, rehab isn't magical."

"How would you fucking know?" Frank said bitterly, regretting it immediately. He felt Robby pause in his caressing of Frank's hair. "Sorry."

"No need, I deserve that," he said softly. "I can't tell you how many times I got ready to go visit you and then sat in my house like a coward. But I'm here now, I promise I am."

Frank nodded against his throat, then gave in to a different urge. He put a hand on the side of Robby's throat and pressed a kiss to the soft skin there, feeling a shiver run through the man.

They stood in silence for a few moments before the door to the viewing room opened and Abbott strolled in, coffee in hand. He hardly reacted other than a raised eyebrow.

"Dr. Robby, I am here to release you for the night," he faked a curtsey and walked out once more, closing the door softly. They hadn't stopped hugging until then, breaking apart reluctantly.

Robby brushed away Frank's tears before wiping his own on the back of his hand.

"Now, tell me honestly," Robby put his hands on Frank's shoulders. "Does your back hurt?"

Frank's bottom lip wobbled. He hesitated before nodding solemnly.

"Okay Frank," Robby nodded definitively. "And does your bandage need replacing?"

"No, I leave them for days just fine," he sniffed, and at Robby's silence looked up. "What?"

Robby clicked his tongue and shook his head.

"Let's go to your apartment and get you some medications and some new bandages, alright?"

"But I just said—"

“I know what you said, but it was ridiculous,” Robby smiled slightly. “Doctor’s orders, Langdon.”

He was nodding before realizing. Robby went to reach for the door handle and was lurched back by Frank pulling him in and kissing his cheek harshly, less a kiss and more a smashing of gratitude landing on his cheekbone. Robby chuckled and wrapped his larger hands around Frank’s wrists.

With that, they walked into the ED to gather their things and head to Frank’s apartment. For once, Frank didn’t feel quite like an old dog curling up in a dog house to lick its own wounds in solitude. And for the first time in a long time, he felt alright.

Chapter 2

The apartment was a fucking mess, but Frank couldn't bring himself to care all that much. It was embarrassing, sure, but Robby had seen him at his most desperate and addicted, so a few piles of dried clothes not yet folded and plates not washed were nothing in comparison.

He knew that Robby knew his relationship with Abby was over. Dana must have told him so he could avoid bringing it up and causing his already rough return to the ED worse.

Framed photos of Frank with his children littered the apartment, both a testament to his adoration for them and as a constant punishment. A reminder at everything he had fucked up when he let addiction overtake him. He knew it was wrong to think like that, but he couldn't help it.

"Cute kids," Robby pointed over at a photo of Frank cradling his daughter after she was born, Tanner leaning over him to get a better look. Frank said nothing, smiling quickly and making his way to the living room.

He didn't want to think about how he cut himself last night looking at that photo— the failed father that had cursed his children to have an addict for a parent for the rest of their lives.

"Doin' alright?" He heard Robby ask behind him. "I have the medicine for your back if you want to get comfortable."

Frank could feel his muscles lock up when he remembered why he was here. He didn't want it. He didn't want to feel the relief of medicine like he used to. He didn't want to lose control, like he knew he had before.

"I don't deserve that shit," he muttered. "Keep it."

"Fuck no," Robby said. His hand came to curl around Frank's bicep, unfortunately forgetting the bandage there. Frank flinched back violently at the sting. "What…? Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean…"

Frank shook his head with a shaky smile. Robby looked like he was torn between stripping Frank's shirts to see the damage and running to avoid confrontation. But the look in his eyes was determined, and Frank knew that getting wound treatment from him would not be

about if, but when.

“You’re taking the medicine,” Robby said in that voice that he knew—he had to *know* how it affected him—that he could never refuse to follow the order. “Now sit on the sofa.”

Frank felt like he moved on autopilot when he padded over to the couch and fell into it with a long sigh. It hurt. He hurt. It all *hurt*, physically and mentally. He was both exhausted from pain and in too much pain to fall asleep.

A cup of water was pushed into his hands as well as some ibuprofen. He stared at it, unblinking. They stared back, taunting him.

What, they asked. *You gonna get addicted to us too, loser?*

He gulped down some water to stall. Robby crossed his arms and sat behind him, staring at him with expectant eyes. Frank’s eyes wandered around as he let out another sigh, until they landed on something he had completely forgotten to hide when he had gotten home: a single razor blade rested on a coaster, red blood staining the sharp edge.

Before he could try and get rid of it without the older man noticing, Robby followed his eyes and took in the same thing he had. He clicked his tongue disapprovingly, standing up and picking it up angrily.

He’s disappointed again the pills said. *You just never win, do you Frank?*

“You. Take the pills while I…” he gestured his head over to the bathroom, the open door revealing his dirty clothes on the tile. “Are there any more I should know about?”

“No,” Frank replied, but his voice carried desperation that was revealing. He didn’t want to get rid of what was now a lifeline in an ocean of pain and emptiness.

Robby just let out a sigh and went to flush the razor down the toilet, watching it swirl around the porcelain before disappearing. Frank had still not taken the pills by the time he returned.

“Here, I’ll help you, Frank,” Robby sat by his side, so close he could smell him. “Take a mouthful of water.”

Frank obliged out of sheer curiosity. The water sat in his mouth like a lake. He watched Robby take the medication from his hands, take one

pill between his pointer and thumb, and press it swiftly against Frank's lips until it slid through to mix with the water. Before he could spit it out, he had pressed in another one and taken his chin in his palm. Tilting Frank's head back firmly, Frank had no other option but to drink the medication so as to not choke.

It was…something else. Frank didn't know anyone in the entire world, seven billion people, who would do that for him. And it made his chest feel like it was set ablaze. His cheeks and tips of his ears felt licked by the flames.

He stared at Robby with wide eyes as he leaned in and pressed his lips to his eyebrow. They were cold from the air conditioning and a shiver went through Frank at the motion.

"Good job," he whispered, and the blaze in his cheeks got so hot Robby chuckled, patting his skin with his fingertips. "You alright?"

Frank put his hand over Robby's fingertips, pressing them into his face with a giddy smile he couldn't stop.

"I'm better than alright."

Robby's eyes flickered down to his lips. For a second, the world stood still for what Frank was sure would finally, *finally* come. But Robby just pursed his lips with a sad frown.

"Not yet you're not," he whispered. "Where's your first aid kit."

Frank's heart dropped from where it had risen to his throat. He leaned forward and pressed his face in Robby's shoulder, whining frustratedly. This man was killing him in his attempts to save his sorry ass.

"You don't have to do all that," he groaned. "Don't worry about it. Let's make out."

Robby chuckled softly and ran his fingers through Frank's hair, "Not yet, not yet. I want to check out that bandage."

"It's white and secure. Anything else."

Robby reached down to pinch the skin of his side, and he laughed in response.

"What's under it is more important," Robby said. "Dumbass."

Frank shook his head against his throat, moving so he could place an open mouth kiss on the man's throat. Robby shuddered to a halt at the movement, his hand coming back up to cup his neck until he started to push Frank back. Frank groaned with impatience.

"You can't distract me, I'm a doctor," Robby narrowed his eyes at Frank when he let out an exasperated sigh.

"I'm a doctor too," Frank retorted. "Can you just trust me that it's fine. They barely bled. You're overexaggerating based on prior patients you've seen who were much worse. They needed assistance. I don't."

Robby stood up, incensed.

"No, I can't just trust you—"

"What, cause addicts are all liars?"

"What the hell?" Robby's eyes opened wider. "No, I can't trust you on this because you're *biased*, Dr. Langdon. You will always undermine your own pain, you always have, and you still do! If you wait until you're in agony before getting help for your back, whose to say you won't wait until you're bleeding out to seek medical attention?"

Frank hung his head in shameful recognition. Yeah…that did sound like him. In fact, he had thought about how far he had to go to get help before. His injuries barely felt valid— just a bit deeper than cat scratches, they were barely what one would consider bad enough to get admitted for inpatient care as someone who self harms.

"They're not bad."

"No, they're not," Robby agreed, and Frank looked up. "They're not *bad* because you're not a bad person, and there's no morality assigned to different coping mechanisms. But they *are* damage to your body, and we won't be 'making out' until I'm sure you're taken care of."

"Ugh," Frank rolled his eyes. "Fine."

Robby let out a genuine laugh from his belly and Frank nearly fell off his sofa in awe.

"Is me threatening not to kiss you what sealed the deal, or the other things I said?"

Frank pushed himself up to stand, his back aching a little less than it

was before but still throbbing.

“Take a guess, genius.”

Robby laughs again, bringing up his fingers to his eyes in disbelief. He follows Frank to the bathroom and pats the counter so Frank will jump up. He gets the first aid kit from beneath the sink, and Frank sees his sad eyes take in the depleted stock there.

Then, the doctor part of Robby takes over. He opens the kit and positions himself between Frank’s thighs. He’s sure the older man is ignoring the slight tent in his pants and the raging red flush on his face and neck and ears, and for that he is grateful.

“Should I take my clothes off for you?” Frank says before he thinks about how he sounds, and his jaw drops a bit at his own audacity before Robby nods as if to ask *seriously? That’s what you went with.*

Frank grits his teeth a bit to fight through the nausea that hits him when he realizes what he will reveal when he removes his shirts.

Then he feels a large hand on the side of his thigh and looks at Robby. He has an understanding look on his face and he nods slightly, signaling that it’s alright, that he can take his time. Frank breathes in for ten full seconds, eyes closed and counting. A coping mechanism for panic he was taught in rehab. He thinks of Raphael and hopes he’s alright.

Then he hooks his hands across the bottom of his shirts and removes them both, a move he learned from his sisters and mom growing up that he never grew out of. He hears his sharp intake of air from Robby and keeps his eyes closed as he is dissected like an animal.

But instead of what he thought would happen—fingers touching all the healed scabs and scratches on his body, the bruises he formed himself, and questions—Robby just leans over and kisses his temple.

“Thank you for trusting me with this,” he whispers in Frank’s ear, and he has to fight the urge to crash their lips together and force him to ignore the bandage wrapped around his arm and take him to bed. But he resists, and simply clears his throat with a nod.

Robby’s hands are gentle as they unwind the bandage. Before he fully takes it off, Frank places his hand over his and stares directly at the floor.

“Frank?”

Frank continues to stare at the floor as he struggles to string his words together.

“Um…I’m not sure what they taught you about dealing with…all this,” he mutters, eyes trained to the tile. “But please don’t tell me it’s not bad or not that deep, because it might…make me go deeper next time. Please.”

One tear drop trickled down his cheek as he spoke, humiliated at having to say such a thing to his attending.

“Understood,” Robby replied clinically. “Thanks for telling me.”

Frank nodded and moved his hand, closing his eyes as Robby took in his arm and got the necessary tools from the kit. The hand on his thigh left, and in its place was a chill that made Frank want to run. But he stayed. He was tired of hiding, so tired.

“Frank?”

“Yeah?”

“How long have you done this?”

Frank flinched, and Robby apologized quickly, telling him he didn’t have to say if he didn’t want to. Frank shook his head. If he was seeing the cuts littering his torso, what else would hurt?

“Since rehab.”

Robby’s hands stopped for a few moments before returning. He wiped the antibiotic cream on the healing scabs gently, rubbing it into the skin with precise motions.

“Can I ask why?”

Frank laughed bitterly.

“Why not?”

It was silent for a few minutes as Robby worked. Frank thought about Raphael, about his arms and the scars there, and how much pain he had been in to do that. He thought about him not trusting Frank enough to wake him up before attempting suicide, or whatever he had been doing to himself in the kitchens. He wondered if he ever had

someone so willing to listen to his problems and if he wondered if he ever pushed them away like he was.

He hadn't noticed the tears rolling down his face until Robby's hand came up to wipe them away and bring him in for a hug. He felt pathetic and tired and scared and touch starved like a dog begging for scraps at a street corner.

"M-my roommate in rehab he had…scars," Frank cried into Robby's jacket. "And I thought maybe it would help. Maybe it would give me what drugs had given me."

"And what's that Frank? What did it give you?"

"I thought it would help me cope, with everything," Frank sobbed out in a cracking voice. "You were right, this job has b-broken me forever. And instead of helping it's just fucked me up even more."

They stood there for a long while, until his sobs became cries and trickled down to sniffles. Then Robby brought him up to look at his face. The man had tears drying on his own face.

"Listen to me," he said, cradling Frank's chin. "I was wrong, alright? This job hasn't broken you, and definitely not forever. You help people, you *helped people* even when all you needed was for someone to help you. Alright?"

Frank sniffled and shrugged.

"No, I'm not asking, baby," Robby said in that voice again, and Frank looked up at the name. "I'm telling you. You are not fucked up. You never were. You're incredible, and you slipped, and you hurt yourself because you were in pain and didn't know where else to go."

Frank just stared at him, in awe of the man who somehow, somehow always knew what to say and when to say it. The man that he adored and admired and would fall to his knees for and praise the heavens for and kiss senseless.

"But you do have somewhere to go now, and it's to me," Robby said. "I don't care when, I don't care why, and I don't care where. You need me, I'm there. Nod if you understand, Frank."

He nodded slowly, eyes trained directly to Robby's lips.

"Now, as for the cutting," he said, and his eyes snapped up to his

knowing eyes. “I know you won’t just quit, it doesn’t work like that. And I’m not putting you through hospitalization. But there’s harm reduction practices you need to implement, like always having *clean*, non-rusted razors unlike the one I threw out. So tell me where the rest are so I can throw out the dangerous ones, alright?”

Frank opened the medicine cabinet behind the mirror without looking, and Robby snatched the black box containing his razors piled in there. For only three months, he had accumulated a lot. Robby through out about half, flushing them. He put half back in and put the box back.

“Okay, the worst is over. Can you look at me?”

Frank looked up with watery eyes. Robby cradled his face in his hands.

You did really well,” he whispered. “Now, would you rather I kiss you here or somew—”

“Now,” Frank said desperately. “Now, *now, now*.”

Robby silenced him with his lips, pressing them—*finally*— to his own. His large hand rested softly on Frank’s throat, making him go a little insane. His own hands found homes on Robby’s waist, the weight there filling his hands. For a moment, he mourned being the only one without a shirt on, but in time it would change, he was sure.

Robby deepened the kiss as his tongue pressed against Frank’s own, making him sigh in deep content. He tasted like mint. Robby’s hand moved to the back of his neck, playing with the hair drooping down there from Frank letting his hair grow out. His other hand rested on the cuts he just sealed up, as if telling Frank he wanted him not in spite of his wounds, but including them.

Frank found that in all his experiments with trying to float above himself, above his pain and the chaos and tragedy of life, kissing Robby like this was by far his favorite. And it wasn’t self-destructive, though he knew Robby’s tongue on his neck, sucking a bruise into his throat that he’d have to buy concealer to cover was not the cure to self injury.

But self injury was something he wished desperately he could give up, to live his life without having to rely on.

He didn’t want to live a life without Robby in it, holding him like this. And for now, that seemed like enough. It had to be.

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